

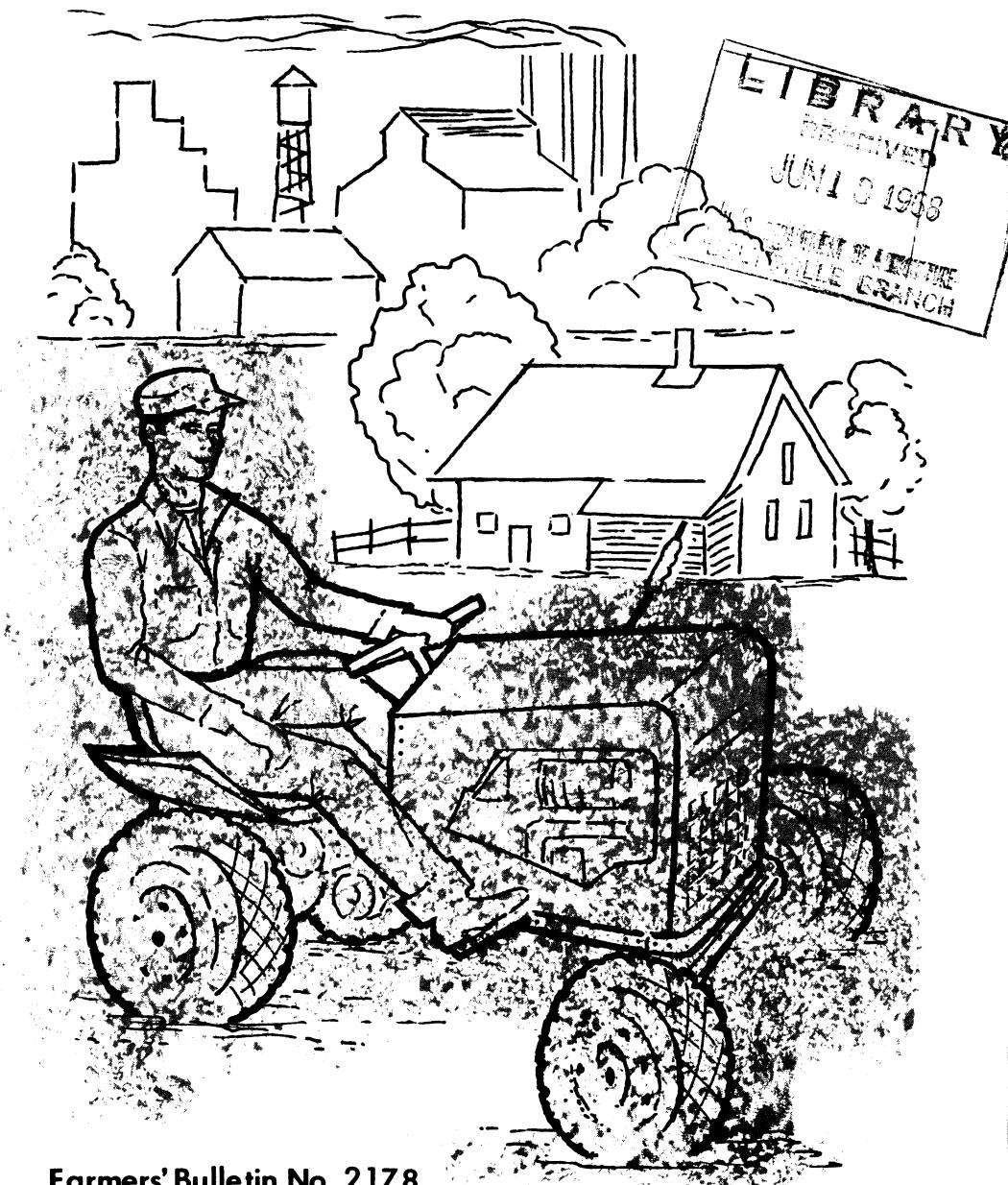
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PART-TIME FARMING



Farmers' Bulletin No. 2178

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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by Orlin J. Scoville
Farm Production Economics Division
Economic Research Service

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PART-TIME FARMING

A part-time farmer is one who lives with his family on a farm—usually a small farm—but gets a big part of his income from sources other than his farm.

Usually, this income from other sources comes from work off the farm; it may come also from pensions or annuities or from other investments.

Most part-time farmers live near big cities. They work in nearly all kinds of industries, trades, and professions. Many have jobs that are seasonal or that take less than a full working day.

Persons who have retired from other jobs may find that farming on a small scale is a part-time job to their liking. Those who are partly disabled may be able to plan a farm program that fits their health and ability.



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Part-time farming is a good way to supplement retirement income.

DISADVANTAGES AND ADVANTAGES

As a way of life, part-time farming has both disadvantages and advantages.

Moving to a part-time farm from town or city will involve changes in the social activities of the whole family. Whether these changes are to the advantage or disadvantage of the family depends on the attitudes and goals of the family members.

Moving to the farm is likely to mean replacing old interests with new ones and the spending of more time at home by every member of the family. The farmer may find that part-time farming takes up most of the time formerly spent on golf or other sports. The farmer's wife may spend what was formerly free time working in the garden or caring for poultry.

DISADVANTAGES

- Farming is confining. The farmer's life must be arranged to meet the demands of crops and livestock.

Livestock must be tended every day, routinely. A slight change in the work schedule may cut the production of cows or chickens.

Even if there are no livestock, the farmer cannot leave the farm for long periods, particularly during the growing season.

The worker who lives on a farm cannot change jobs readily. He cannot leave the farm to take work in another locality on short notice; such a move may mean a loss of capital.

- Hard physical labor and undesirable hours are a part of farm life. The farmer must get up early, and, at times, work late at night. Frequently he must work long hours in the hot sun or cold rain. No matter how well work is planned, bad weather or unexpected setbacks can cause extra work that must be caught up.

It may not be profitable for a part-time farmer to own the labor-saving machinery that a full-time farmer can invest in profitably.

- Production may fall far below expectations. Drought, hail, disease, and insects take their toll of crops. Sickness or loss of some of the livestock may cut into the owner's earnings, even into his capital.

- Returns for money and labor invested may be small even in a good year.

The high cost of land, supplies, and labor make it difficult to farm

profitably on a part-time basis. Land within commuting distance of a growing city is usually high in price, higher if it has subdivision possibilities. Part-time farmers generally must pay higher prices for supplies than full-time farmers because they buy in smaller quantities. If the farm is in an industrial area where wages are high, farm labor costs will also be high.

A part-time farmer needs unusual skill to get as high production per hen, per cow, or per acre as can be obtained by a competent full-time farmer. It will frequently be uneconomical for him to own the most up-to-date equipment. He may have to depend upon custom service for specialized operations, such as spraying or threshing, and for these, he may have to wait his turn. There will be losses caused by emergencies that arise while he is away at his off-farm job.

- The farm may be an additional burden if the main job is lost. This may be true whether the farm is owned or rented.

If the farm is rented, the rent must be paid. If it is owned, taxes must be paid, and if the place is not free of mortgage, there will be interest and payments on the principal to take care of.

ADVANTAGES

- A farm provides a wholesome and healthful environment for children. It gives them room to play and plenty of fresh air. The children can do chores adapted to their age and ability. Caring for a calf, a pig, or some chickens develops in

children a sense of responsibility for work.

- Part-time farming gives a measure of security if the regular job is lost, *provided* the farm is owned free of debt and furnishes enough income to meet fixed expenses and minimum living costs.

- For some retired persons, part-time farming is a good way to supplement retirement income. It is particularly suitable for those who need to work or exercise out of doors for their health.

- Generally, the same level of living costs less in the country than in the city. The savings are not as great, however, as is some-

time supposed. Usually, the cost of food and shelter will be somewhat less on the farm and the cost of transportation and utilities somewhat more. Where schools, fire and police protection, and similar municipal services are of equal quality in city and country, real estate taxes are usually about the same.

- A part-time farmer and his family can use their spare time profitably.

- Some persons consider the work on a farm recreational. For some white-collar workers it is a welcome change from the regular job, and a physical conditioner.

LAND, LABOR, AND EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Part-time farming can take comparatively little land, labor, and equipment—or a great deal. It depends on the kind and the scale of the farming operation.

General requirements for land, labor, and equipment are discussed below. Specific requirements for each of various types of enterprises are discussed on pages 8 to 14.

LAND

Three quarters to 1 acre of good land is enough for raising fruits and vegetables for home use, and for a small flock of chickens, a cow, and two pigs. You could not, of course, raise feed for the livestock on a plot this small.

If you want to raise feed or carry out some enterprise on a larger scale, you'll need more land.

In deciding how much land you want, take into account the amount you'll need to bring in the income you expect. But consider also how much you and your family can keep up along with your other work. The cost of land and the prospects for appreciation in value may influence your decision. Some part-time farmers buy more land than they need in anticipation of suburban development. This is a highly speculative venture.

Sometimes a desired acreage is offered only as part of a larger tract. When surplus land is not expensive to buy or to keep up, it is usually better to buy it than to buy so small an acreage that the development of adjoining properties might impair the residential value of the farm.

TABLE 1.—*Approximate amount of labor needed each month for selected home-production enterprises in the East Central States*

Enterprise	Hours of labor needed during—												
	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total
Garden, 1 acre, well-diversified, prepared with horse or tractor power			30	110	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	500	
Field corn, 10 acres, cut, shucked, husked by hand			15	20	35	25	8	—	—	30	65	32	10
Hay, 10 acres			20	20	20	20	10	10	10	25	20	20	240
Milk cow, 1 ¹			6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	120
Laying hens, 12			6	6	8	8	8	8	8	3	3	6	72
Pigs, 2			—	—	2	1	2	2	2	—	—	—	48
Bees, 1 or 2 colonies			10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	20
Rabbits, 1 buck and 4 does			15	14	14	13	12	10	10	10	20	20	120
Milk goats, 2			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	165

¹ Shift in time of freshening would shift monthly hours of labor in various months.

LABOR

If you have a year-round, full-time job you can't expect to grow much more than your family uses—unless other members of the family do a good deal of the work or you hire help. As a rule, part-time farmers hire little help.

In deciding on the enterprises to be managed by family labor, compare the amount of labor that can be supplied by the family with the labor needs of various enterprises listed in table 1.

List the number of hours the family can be expected to work each month. You may want to include your own regular vacation period if you have one. Do not include all your spare time or all your family's spare time—only what you are willing to use for farm work.

EQUIPMENT

If you are going to produce for home use only, you will need only hand tools. You will probably want to hire someone to do the plowing, however.

For larger plantings, you'll need some kind of power for plowing, harrowing, disking, and cultivating. If you have a planting of half an acre or more you may want to buy a small garden tractor (available for \$350 to \$600 with attachment, 1967 prices). These tractors are not entirely satisfactory for plowing, particularly on heavier soils, so you may still want to hire someone to do the plowing.

Cost of power and machinery is often a serious problem to the small-scale farmer. If you are go-

ing to farm for extra cash income on a part-time basis you must keep in mind the needed machinery investments when you choose among farm enterprises.

You can keep your machinery investment down by buying good secondhand machinery, by sharing the cost and upkeep of machinery with a neighbor, and by hiring someone with machinery to do certain jobs. If an expensive and specialized piece of machinery is needed—such as a spray rig, a combine, or a binder—it is better to pay someone with a machine to do the work.



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For larger plantings you'll need some kind of power for plowing, harrowing, disking, and cultivating.

SELECTING A FARM

Before you look for a farm you'll need to know (1) the kind and scale of farming you want to undertake; and (2) whether you want to buy or rent.

Information on pages 8 to 14 may help you in deciding on the kind and scale of your farming venture.

If you are not well acquainted with the area in which you wish to locate, or if you are not sure that you and your family will like and make a success of farming, usually you would do better to rent a place for a year or two before you buy.

Discussed below are some of the main things to look for when you select a part-time farm.

LOCATION

Nearness to work.—Choose a location within easy commuting distance of both the regular job and other employment opportunities. Then if you change jobs you won't necessarily have to sell the farm. The presence of alternative job opportunities also will make the place easier to sell if that should become desirable.

Obviously, the farm should be on an all-weather road.

Nearness to markets.—If you grow anything to sell you will need markets nearby. If you plan to sell fresh vegetables or whole milk, for example, you should be close to a town or city.

Kind of neighborhood.—Look for a farm in a neighborhood of well-kept homes. There are slums in the country as well as in the city.

Few rural areas are protected by zoning. A tavern, filling station, junk yard, rendering plant, or some other business may go up near enough to your home to hurt its value.

Facilities in the area.—Check on the schools in the area, the quality of teaching, and the provision for transportation to and from them.

Find out whether fire protection, sewage system, gas, water mains, and electrical lines are available in the locality. If these facilities are not at the door, getting them may cost more than you expect. You may have to provide them yourself or get along without them.

You cannot get along without an adequate supply of pure water. If you are considering a part-time farm where the water must be provided by a well, find out if there is a good well on the farm or the probable cost of having one drilled. A pond may provide adequate water for livestock and garden. Pond water can be filtered for human use, but most part-time farmers would not want to go to so much trouble.

The following amounts of water are needed per day for livestock and domestic uses.

	Amount of water needed per day <i>Gallons</i>
Household of 5 persons	125
Horse	10
Steer or dry cow	12
Milk cow	25
Hog	2
Sheep	1.5
Hens, 100	8
Lawn and garden, 100 square feet (when needed)	8

TOPOGRAPHY AND SOIL

Is the land suited to the crops you intend to raise? If you can't tell, get help from your county agricultural agent or other local specialist. Soil type, drainage, or degree of slope can make the difference between good crops and poor ones. Small areas that aren't right for a certain crop may lie next to areas that are well suited to that crop.

THE HOUSE

Will the house on any part-time farm you are considering make a satisfactory full-time residence? How much will it cost to do any necessary modernizing and redecorating? If the house is not wired adequately for electricity or if plumbing or a central heating system must be installed, check into the cost of making these improvements.

BUYING A FARM

The value of the farm to you will depend on—

- Its worth as a place to live.
- The value of the products you can raise on it.
- The possibilities of selling the property later on for suburban subdivision.

Decide first what the place is worth to you and your family as a home in comparison with what it would cost to live in town. Take into account the difference in city and county taxes, insurance rates, utility rates, and the cost of travel to work.

Next, estimate the value of possible earnings of the farm. To do this, set up a plan on paper for operating the farm. List the kind and quantity of things the farm can be expected to produce in an average year. Estimate the value of the produce at normal prices. The total is the probable gross income from farming.

To find estimated net farm income, subtract estimated annual farming expenditures from probable gross income from farming. Include as expenditures an allow-

ance for depreciation of farm buildings and equipment. Also count as an expense a charge for the labor to be contributed by the family. It may be hard to decide what this labor is worth, but charge something for it. Otherwise, you may pay too much for the farm and get nothing for your labor.

To figure the value of the farm in terms of investment income, divide the estimated annual net farm income by the percentage that you could expect to get in interest if the money were invested in some other way. If, for example, you can reasonably expect to get 5 percent on the money you invest and the estimated annual net farm income would be \$100, divide \$100 by 5 percent. The answer, \$2,000, is the value of the farm to you as an income source.

Whether you can buy a farm for the amount of its value to you as a home plus its value as an income producer will depend, among other things, on its nearness to a city.

A farm within commuting distance of a city—roughly within 30

miles of it—is likely to be one-half to two-thirds more expensive than one farther out. A farm near one of the larger cities will cost more than one near a smaller city.

Land located on a hard-surfaced road is likely to cost 10 to 30 percent more than comparable land served by a dirt road. You can expect to pay more for location on a good road in the eastern part of the country than in the Middle West.

Prices asked for small farms suitable for part-time farming reflect primarily the size and condition of the house. Compare the price asked with the probable cost of a comparable house in town, making allowances for differences in heating system, water supply, and sanitary facilities.

The alternative to buying a place that already has a house is to buy a piece of land and build the kind of house you want. When this is done

the cost of the land is likely to be only a small part of the total cost of setting up the part-time farm.

If you can pay cash for the land, it is usually easier to obtain financing for the cost of a new house on it than to finance the purchase of a place that already has buildings; a new house is a better security for a loan than an old one.

Many savings and loan associations and local banks provide financing for new residences on part-time farms. The Farmers Home Administration also has a special credit program for farm housing that is well adapted to the needs of part-time farmers; this agency also makes production loans to part-time farmers. Other possible sources of loans for part-time farmers are the Farm Credit Administration and some insurance companies.

TYPES OF FARMING ACTIVITIES

The requirements of various farming activities and the probable returns from them are discussed below. Most of these activities provide supplies for home use; many can be done on a larger scale to provide products for sale; a few would be undertaken only to provide products for sale.

In general, if you are going to farm for home use only, it's a good plan to diversify your farming activities, growing those products that you can raise more cheaply than you can buy. But if you are going to farm for market it is better

to specialize in one enterprise; you can then make more effective use of equipment and labor.

GROWING FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

For home use.—If properly managed, half to three-fourths of an acre of good land will grow nearly all the vegetables and small fruits (strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, grapes) used by a family of five. The annual cost of such a garden at 1967 prices would be from \$45 to \$90; this includes ex-

penses for plowing, seeds, plants, fertilizers, sprays, and dusts.

Tree fruits are a welcome addition to the home food supply. However, many part-time farmers find it less expensive to buy tree fruit than to grow it. Many who have fruit trees neglect caring for them; as a result yield is small and fruit is of inferior quality.

About 10 bearing trees of different kinds will supply plenty of fruit for a family of five—if the trees are well tended. They require pruning, cultivating, fertilizing, and spraying. Trees may have to be sprayed five or six times a season and a different spraying schedule must be followed for different kinds of fruit. Special equipment is needed for spraying, unless spraying service is hired.

For market.—In deciding on fruits and vegetables to be grown for market, take into account: (1) Which crops are adapted to your locality and to the soils on your farm; (2) the costs of mechanization of these crops and the labor requirements; and (3) market outlets available.

If you need help in deciding which crops can be grown successfully on your farm, consult an experienced local farmer, your county agricultural agent, the vocational agriculture teacher, or your State agricultural college or experiment station.

Look into the three possible outlets for fresh fruits and vegetables—the fresh market, packers and distributors, and processing plants.

You will receive more for your crops from the fresh market. But

selling takes more time and spoilage losses may be higher. Also, the fresh market in towns and small cities can easily be oversupplied.

Packers and distributors pay less but provide a fairly steady and reliable market. Selling to them does not take much time. Some buy the crop in the field and harvest it.

Processing plants pay the least, but are a more certain market. Many of them contract for the crop at planting time, provide technical guidance, and make loans to cover the costs of seed and labor. All localities, of course, do not have processing plants conveniently available; and many processing plants will handle only one or two crops.

RAISING CHICKENS AND LIVESTOCK

Many part-time farmers keep enough chickens and livestock to supply eggs, milk, and some meat for home use. Some keep larger flocks of chickens and more animals to supply these food items for market.

In deciding whether you want to raise chickens or livestock on either scale, take into account the requirements and the risks.

Both livestock and chickens need suitable buildings and equipment. It takes a special knowledge and skill to care for them. And they require care every day of the year.

You can put off garden work for a day or so and probably not lose much by the delay. But with animals you must follow a regular schedule. Departure from the

schedule may bring a sharp decline in production. Neglect may result in loss of animals.

The risks are considerably greater than in crop production. If a disease starts in a flock of chickens or among farm animals you may lose a sizable investment.

Because it takes a good deal of land to raise feed, part-time farmers generally find it is better to buy than to grow most of the grain feed. To decide which is best in your own situation, consider the acreage needed to raise the feed, the acreage and quality of land available to you, and the price of feed. If you are raising chickens and livestock on a larger scale, consider also whether it would be more profitable to raise more animals than to raise feed for a smaller number.

Shown below is the amount of land it would take to raise the grain needed annually by the chickens and

livestock that might be kept for home use:

12 layers and 40 broilers	-----	1 acre
1 cow	-----	$\frac{3}{4}$ acre
2 pigs (kept for 6 months)	-----	$\frac{2}{3}$ acre

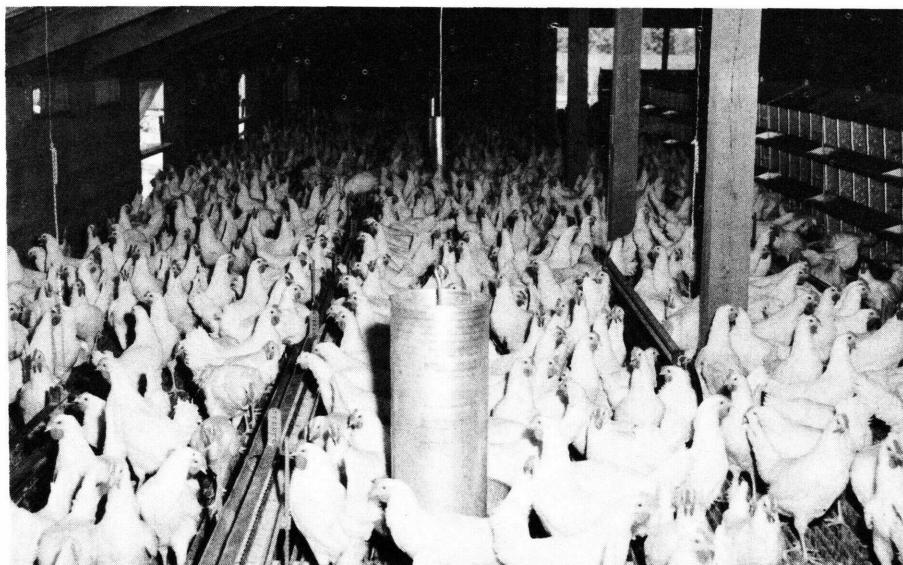
Chickens

For home use.—About a dozen hens, if well cared for, provide from 90 to 110 dozen eggs a year—enough for a family of five.

Hens require little ground. A small poultry house can be built from materials that cost \$50 to \$100. Hens can eat kitchen scraps, but they need in addition about 85 pounds of mash and grain per year per bird. At 1967 prices, this would cost \$50 to \$65 for a dozen hens.

Raising of 40 chicks a year should take care of flock replacements and provide enough chicken for the table.

For market.—There are market outlets for eggs and live or dressed



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There are market outlets for eggs almost everywhere.

chickens almost everywhere. Whether you will make a profit, and how much, depends on feed costs and prices received, both of which vary from time to time. When egg prices are unfavorable, some of the hens can be sold or killed and dressed for home use. The enterprise can be started again when conditions are more favorable.

If you install a mechanized system and use a well-planned layout, you can handle 750 layers or 5,000 broilers a year with 2 hours of work each day.

Cows

Milk for home use.—A good milk cow, properly cared for, gives about 3,500 quarts of milk a year. This is enough to supply milk for a family of five for 10 months and butter for 8 months. The cow will produce no milk for 1½ to 2 months each year.

A good milk cow will cost about \$200 to \$350 (1967 prices). She needs 1 to 2 acres of pasture, about 2½ tons of hay a year, costing \$40 to \$80, and 1,800 to 2,000 pounds of grain and mixed dairy feed, costing \$45 to \$90. She also needs a good shelter, especially if your farm is located where winters are cold.

The annual cost of having a cow bred would run from \$5 to \$10. The value of the calf is usually little more than the combined cost of the breeding service fee, the milk purchased while the cow is dry, and the calf feed.

It should take about 30 to 40 minutes a day to care for the cow when she is producing and about half that time when she is dry.

Home-produced milk, like any raw milk, should be pasteurized. Electric batch-type home pasteurizers are available for about \$40.

Production of milk for market.—Dairying on a commercial scale is out of the question on very small farms. It may be possible on larger part-time farms, but it requires a fairly large investment.

You need a lot of equipment to handle milk to be sold. Strict sanitary requirements must be met. Running the dairy will take a good deal of time, even if you have modern mechanical equipment. Twenty cows require about 3 hours of labor a day if you use milk parlors and mechanical milkers.

Goats

Milk goats need less space, feed, and pasture than milk cows. An inexpensive shed will provide adequate shelter. A good doe gives around 2 quarts of milk a day for 7 to 10 months a year. During the winter she eats 2 or 3 pounds of hay and 1 to 2 pounds of grain each day. During the summer, when she can be tethered out on a grassy plot, she needs only about 1 to 1½ pounds of grain. She will also eat such extras as beet tops, bean and pea vines, sweet corn stover, and other garden truck.

Before deciding to keep a doe, make sure that the services of a buck can be obtained in the community.

If you are interested in producing goat milk for sale, investigate the possibilities for marketing the milk and the sanitary requirements that must be met.

Hogs

Hogs are not well suited to small farms; they need some pasture and they should be kept at least 500 feet away from the house. Many communities prohibit them in thickly settled areas.

Some part-time farmers on larger farms raise one or two hogs for butchering. Usually they buy weanling pigs in the spring, feed them to about 250 pounds, and butcher them in the fall.

One 250-pound hog will yield about 35 pounds of ham, 30 pounds of shoulder, 30 pounds of loin, 50 pounds of lard, 30 pounds of bacon, 5 pounds of spareribs, and 15 pounds of trimmings.

In deciding whether to raise hogs for home use, consider how much pork your family eats in a year and the price of pork on the market in

relation to the price of producing it.

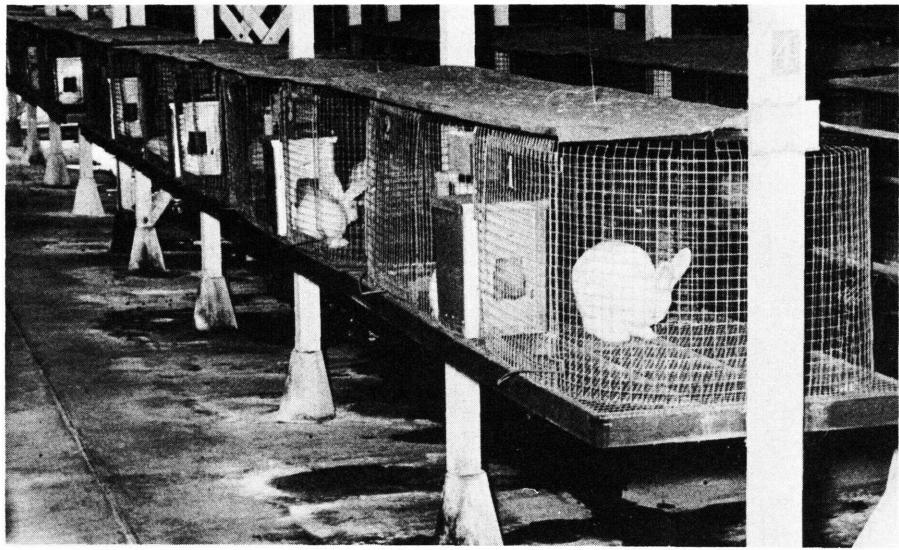
When fat hogs are selling for \$16 a hundred pounds, weanling pigs should cost \$8 to \$12 each. They will eat 800 to 1,000 pounds of grain, which should cost \$25 to \$35.

Hogs need a small pen, a simple shelter, and a trough. Raising two weanling pigs to 250 pounds will take about 2 hours of work a week for 6 months.

Slaughtering and dressing a hog and curing the meat require skill and labor. Many part-time farmers hire a local butcher to do this work.

Rabbits

Rabbit meat for home use.—A buck and 3 or 4 does will produce enough young rabbits to supply as much rabbit meat as a family of five will want.



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Rabbits may be raised for meat and fur or for sale as laboratory animals or breeding stock.

Rabbits require little space and small quantities of feed. Adequate shelter for the rabbits can be constructed at home.

They need good quality hay, some green or juicy food, and a grain ration. Their hutches should be cleaned daily and disinfected once or twice a week.

Rabbits for market.—Rabbits may be raised for meat and fur, for wool (from Angoras), for sale as laboratory animals, or for sale as breeding stock.

Before deciding to raise rabbits for any of these purposes, investigate the market opportunities.

Unless you are thoroughly familiar with the procedures and techniques involved in raising rabbits, it is a good idea to begin on a small scale and expand operations as you gain experience.

KEEPING BEES

You can get enough honey for home use from one or two colonies of bees—with little time or expense. For commercial production of honey you can start on a small scale and increase the colonies as you gain experience.

Work with bees is not evenly distributed over the year. The most time is needed in the late summer and fall when honey is harvested and colonies must be prepared for the winter. In the spring, from shortly before the blossoming of fruit trees until about a month afterward, considerable work must be done in caring for the bees and controlling swarming.

GROWING AND HARVESTING FOREST PRODUCTS

The part-time farmer can get into the forest products business for his own use or for sale by planting a suitable area of land to trees or by managing an established woodland.

Whatever his situation may be, he should not make a final move without first consulting a professional forester. This might be his local farm forester (whom he can reach through his county agent or State forester) or a consulting forester who would charge a fee. Together, he and the forester should examine on the ground the forestry proposition the owner has in mind and determine the best course of action.

Any part-time farmer interested in growing forest products as a commercial venture should carefully weigh the expected returns against the costs and risks involved. Timberland costs, development or rehabilitation cost, taxes and interest, and operational costs are some of the expenses that must have careful consideration.

Returns from investments in woodlands vary considerably just as they do from other investments where the returns are not guaranteed. Furthermore, such investments are necessarily for long periods. Christmas trees can be produced in 10 years or less. It takes 15 to 30 years from planting to produce marketable pulpwood and fence posts, and 40 to 60 or even 100 years to grow good-quality sawlogs and veneer bolts.

Where a part-time farmer has a developed woodland to start with, however, he can often manage it so that income is available every year or two. A well-stocked, uneven-aged stand of trees may increase in volume and value from 3 to 10 percent annually, the rate of increase depending on site, species, and many other factors.

The owner may receive returns in addition to the financial returns from growing timber and selling standing trees. The woodland may be a place to employ his own labor or to fill his own needs for fuel-wood, posts, and wood building materials. He may get returns from wildlife and recreation resources. Many owners derive personal satisfaction from woodland stewardship and enjoyment of recreational and wildlife uses that cannot be valued in money.

MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES

Among other activities carried on by part-time farmers are:

Raising guinea pigs and white rats to be used for scientific experiments.

Raising foxes, mink, muskrats, goldfish, squabs, frogs.

Growing mushrooms, or ginseng or other herbs.

None of these enterprises should be started without careful study of all the facts involved. For many, the market is limited. In nearly all of them unusual skill and understanding of the business is necessary for success. A favorable location with respect to climate and markets usually is important. In several, risks from disease are high. Most of them require a considerable amount of capital.



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The farmer should consult a professional forester before deciding to go into the forest products business.